

**MINUTES OF A REGULAR MEETING OF
THE TORRANCE PLANNING COMMISSION**

1. CALL TO ORDER

The Torrance Planning Commission convened in a regular session at 7:00 p.m. on Wednesday, March 7, 2012 in City Council Chambers at Torrance City Hall.

2. SALUTE TO THE FLAG

The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Commissioner Gibson.

3. ROLL CALL/ MOTIONS FOR EXCUSED ABSENCE

Present: Commissioners D'Anjou, Gibson, Polcari, Rizzo, Uchima, Weideman and Chairperson Skoll.

Absent: None.

Also Present: Deputy Community Development Director Cessna, Sr. Planning Associate Santana, Planning Associate Martinez, Sr. Environmental Officer Jones, Civil Engineer Symons, Plans Examiner Noh, Sr. Fire Prevention Officer Kazandjian, and Assistant City Attorney Sullivan.

4. POSTING OF THE AGENDA

Sr. Planning Associate Santana reported that the agenda was posted on the Public Notice Board at 3031 Torrance Boulevard on Friday, March 2, 2012.

5. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

MOTION: Commissioner Weideman moved to approve the January 18, 2012 Planning Commission minutes as written. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Uchima and passed by unanimous roll call vote, with Commissioners D'Anjou and Gibson abstaining.

MOTION: Commissioner Uchima moved to approve the February 1, 2012 Planning Commission minutes as written. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Rizzo and passed by unanimous roll call vote, with Commissioner Gibson abstaining.

6. REQUESTS FOR POSTPONEMENTS – None.

7. ORAL COMMUNICATIONS #1 – None.

8. TIME EXTENSIONS – None.

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Chairperson Skoll reviewed the policies and procedures of the Planning Commission, including the right to appeal decisions to the City Council.

9. SIGN HEARINGS

9A. SNP12-00001: SOUTH BAY PRE-OWNED DEALERSHIP (ALAMEDA PROPERTIES, LTD)

Planning Commission consideration for approval of a Sign Permit to allow one internally illuminated double-faced electronic readerboard ground sign on property located in the C-2 Zone at 2474 Pacific Coast Highway.

Recommendation: Denial without prejudice.

Sr. Environmental Officer Jones introduced the request.

Martin Sanjer, representing the sign company, urged the Commission to approve the proposed sign, explaining that the sign is necessary because the dealership is located on a curve in the road and it's hard to see from the street because the view is obstructed by buildings and trees. He noted that a readerboard sign was approved for the carwash across the street in 2006 for the same reason.

Responding to questions from the Commission, Sr. Environmental Officer Jones provided clarification regarding the Guidelines for Electronic Readerboard Signs, which were developed by the Environmental Quality Commission in 2006 due to concerns about the proliferation of readerboard signs. She reported that the carwash's readerboard sign was approved before the guidelines were drafted.

Commissioner D'Anjou asked if the dealership has considered the other options mentioned in the staff report, such as raising the height of the existing ground sign or relocating it closer to the street to improve visibility.

Peter Guerro, South Bay Pre-Owned Dealership, stated that he plans to use the existing sign pole because it's his understanding that the sign is "grandfathered" and the pole cannot be moved closer to the street due to an oil company pipeline.

Sr. Planning Associate Santana advised that there are some areas in Torrance where there are pipelines within the public right-of-way and there are restrictions on what can be built or planted on these easements, however, he did not have pipeline maps available at this time to confirm that this site is affected.

Mr. Sanjer explained that it would be more cost effective to replace the existing sign with the readerboard sign as proposed rather than moving the sign closer to the street.

In response to Commissioner Gibson's inquiry, Mr. Guerro stated that he did not want to move the sign closer to the street.

Responding to questions from the Commission, Sr. Environmental Officer Jones provided clarification regarding the recommended conditions of approval included in the staff report. She requested if the Commission decides to approve the sign, that

Condition No. 1 be modified to state that the copy on the readerboard shall remain static for at least 10 seconds.

Commissioner Gibson questioned whether neighbors were notified of this hearing, and Sr. Planning Associate Santana advised that an ad was placed in the *Daily Breeze* and a sign was posted on the site, but notification by mail is not required for sign hearings.

Commissioner Gibson suggested that the City might consider requiring the notification of neighbors due to the potential nuisance of flashing signs. Sr. Planning Associate Santana advised that the Commission would have to make a recommendation to the City Council if they wish to pursue this because it would require the amendment of the Torrance Municipal Code.

In response to Commissioner Uchima's inquiry, Sr. Environmental Officer Jones explained that staff's concerns about electronic readerboard signs are related to safety issues because they could potentially distract drivers and they are also concerned about aesthetics. She reported that there are other electronic readerboard signs in the City, including signs at Rolling Hills Plaza and the Arjay shopping center at Lomita Boulevard and Hawthorne Boulevard, but staff believes they are best reserved for sites where there are multiple tenants so they are not overused.

Commissioner Uchima pointed out that the staff report acknowledges that there are visibility issues at this location and noted that each sign request is considered on a case-by-case basis so the Commission would not be setting a precedent by approving this application.

Chairman Skoll questioned why staff did not include a condition requiring the sign to be extinguished by 10:00 p.m. as recommended in the Guidelines for Electronic Readerboard Signs.

Sr. Environmental Officer Jones explained that this condition is typically included when the sign is immediately adjacent to residential properties, which is not the case with this site.

Chairperson Skoll related his belief that the sign should be turned off at 10:00 p.m. if it is approved due to the hotel next door.

Mr. Sanjer explained that the sign is controlled via computer so it would be very easy to turn it off at 10:00 p.m., as well as set the time the display is to remain static. With regard to the condition requiring the illumination to be reduced at dusk, he reported that the sign dims automatically.

MOTION: Commissioner Polcari moved to close the public hearing. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Gibson and passed by unanimous voice vote.

Commissioner Weideman conceded that electronic readerboard signs can be useful in some cases, such as the one proposed for the corner of Sepulveda and Madrona to highlight community events, but indicated that he personally does not like them for aesthetic reasons.

Commissioner D'Anjou thanked Mr. Guerro for choosing to do business in Torrance. She stated that she understood that his goal is to increase business, which is something that will also benefit the City of Torrance, however she believes this goal needs to be reached working within the framework that has been established.

Chairperson Skoll expressed concerns that the alternative mentioned in the staff report, relocating the sign closer to the street, might not be possible due to underground pipelines and suggested the possibility of continuing this hearing so staff could confirm whether or not this is the case.

Commissioner Rizzo indicated that he was inclined to support a continuance so staff could research the matter of the pipeline.

Commissioner Gibson expressed support for the staff recommendation.

MOTION: Commissioner Gibson moved to deny SNP12-00001 without prejudice. The motion was seconded by Commissioner D'Anjou and discussion continued.

MOTION: Commissioner Rizzo moved to continue the hearing to allow staff an opportunity to research the feasibility of relocating the sign closer to the street, and discussion briefly continued.

Commissioner Uchima related his understanding that the applicant was not interested in relocating the sign due to the cost involved and suggested that the public hearing be reopened so the applicant could comment.

MOTION: Commissioner Polcari moved to reopen the public hearing. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Rizzo and passed by a 5-2 roll call vote, with Commissioners D'Anjou and Gibson dissenting.

Mr. Guerro stated that he has already researched this matter and there is nothing that can be done to the sign other than changing the box and requested that the Commission approve the sign as proposed.

MOTION: Commissioner Weideman moved to close the public hearing. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Rizzo and passed by unanimous voice vote.

The substitute motion died for lack of a second, and the Commission voted on the original motion.

MOTION: Commissioner Gibson moved to deny SNP12-00001 without prejudice. The motion was seconded by Commissioner D'Anjou and passed by unanimous roll call vote.

Commissioner Uchima stated that he found this to be a very difficult decision because he understands the applicant needs to generate more business and also understands the City's concerns about aesthetics.

Commissioners emphasized that Mr. Guerro could appeal the decision to the City Council.

Planning Associate Martinez read aloud the number and title of Planning Commission Resolution No. 12-013.

MOTION: Commissioner Weideman moved to adopt Planning Commission Resolution No. 12-013. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Rizzo and passed by unanimous roll call vote.

10. **CONTINUED HEARINGS** – None.

11. **WAIVERS** – None.

12. **FORMAL HEARINGS**

12A. **PRE12-00003: GREG SCHNEIDER (DON SMITH-ARIZMENDI/ MITCH CLOW)**

Planning Commission consideration for approval of a Precise Plan of Development to allow semi-subterranean and upper level additions to an existing one-story, single-family residence on property located within the Hillside Overlay District in the R-1 Zone at 416 Avenida de Jose.

Recommendation: Approval.

Planning Associate Martinez introduced the request.

Commissioner Uchima announced that he was abstaining from consideration of this item because he lives within the notification area and exited the dais.

Greg Schneider, project architect, voiced his agreement with the recommended conditions of approval and briefly described the proposed project. He explained that the garage will be converted to living space to take advantage of the view and there will be only minor changes to the existing building envelope because the bulk of the addition will be subterranean.

MOTION: Commissioner Gibson moved to close the public hearing. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Polcari and passed by unanimous voice vote (absent Commissioner Uchima).

MOTION: Commissioner Rizzo moved for the approval of PRE12-00003, as conditioned, including all findings of fact set forth by staff. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Polcari and passed by unanimous roll call vote (absent Commissioner Uchima).

Chairperson Skoll commended the architect for doing an excellent job of designing the project.

Planning Associate Martinez read aloud the number and title of Planning Commission Resolution No. 12-014.

MOTION: Commissioner Rizzo moved to adopt Planning Commission Resolution No. 12-014. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Polcari and passed by unanimous roll call vote (absent Commissioner Uchima).

Commissioner Uchima returned to the dais.

12B. MOD12-00001: ARIEL VALLI (EXTRA SPACE STORAGE)

Planning Commission consideration for approval of a Modification of a Conditional Use Permit (CUP73-22) to allow the remodel of an existing self-storage facility, in conjunction with the reconfiguration of the sales office and manager's unit on property located in the M-L Zone at 17421 Western Avenue.

Recommendation: Approval.

Planning Associate Martinez introduced the request.

Ariel Valli, representing Extra Space Storage, voiced his agreement with the recommended conditions of approval. He briefly described the proposed project, noting that it includes an upgrade of the façade and a new office and manager's unit with a two-car garage.

MOTION: Commissioner Uchima moved to close the public hearing. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Polcari and passed by unanimous voice vote.

MOTION: Commissioner Polcari moved for the approval of MOD12-00001, as conditioned, including all findings of fact set forth by staff. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Weideman and passed by unanimous roll call vote.

Chairperson Skoll commented positively on the project, noting that the site is in need of improvement.

Planning Associate Martinez read aloud the number and title of Planning Commission Resolution No. 12-015.

MOTION: Commissioner Polcari moved to adopt Planning Commission Resolution No. 12-015. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Uchima and passed by unanimous roll call vote.

13. RESOLUTIONS – None.

14. PUBLIC WORKSHOP ITEMS – None.

15. MISCELLANEOUS ITEMS – None.

16. REVIEW OF CITY COUNCIL ACTION ON PLANNING MATTERS

Sr. Planning Associate Santana reported that the City Council approved the Ordinance regulating mobile food vendors at last night's Council meeting.

17. LIST OF TENTATIVE PLANNING COMMISSION CASES

Sr. Planning Associate Santana reviewed the agenda for the March 21, 2012 Planning Commission meeting.

18. ORAL COMMUNICATIONS #2

18A. Sr. Planning Associate Santana reported that the Planning Commission recognition dinner for Harvey Horwich has been scheduled for Thursday, April 19, at The Depot restaurant and noted that Mr. Horwich was honored for his many years of service at the March 6 City Council meeting.

18B. Chairperson Skoll commented that he thought the Commission's first sign hearing (Agenda Item 9A) went well and while he sympathized with the business owner, he felt that guidelines should not be deviated from unless absolutely necessary.

18C. Commissioner D'Anjou requested that photographs include a notation of the vantage point when possible. She questioned when the Commission would begin seeing the smaller-sized plans.

Sr. Planning Associate Santana advised that applicants are given the option of submitting either standard-sized plans or the smaller size recently approved by the Commission, and he expected that the Commission would begin seeing the smaller plans in the near future.

18D. Commissioner Gibson stated that she was honored to attend the City Council meeting at which Harvey Horwich was recognized, noting that she served 8 years with him on the Parks and Recreation Commission and 6 years on the Planning Commission.

18E. Commenting on Agenda Item 9A, Commissioner Gibson suggested that it might be helpful if the car dealership appeals the decision because the Commission would gain some insight on the City Council's views on electronic readerboard signs.

18F. Commissioner Uchima stated that he was glad to see the large turnout for Harvey Horwich at last night's Council meeting and looks forward to recognizing him again at the Planning Commission dinner.

18G. Chairperson Skoll noted that he was pleased to speak on behalf of the Planning Commission at the Council's recognition of Harvey Horwich.

19. ADJOURNMENT

At 8:22 p.m., the meeting was adjourned to Wednesday, March 21, 2012 at 7:00 p.m.

Approved as Submitted May 2, 2012 s/ Sue Herbers, City Clerk
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